

**EDITORS' ATTITUDES TOWARD AGRICULTURAL NEWS  
AND THEIR USE OF AGRICULTURAL NEWS  
IN NEW MEXICO NEWSPAPERS**

by

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Although New Mexico's farm and ranch population of 72,000 accounts for only about seven percent of the state's estimated one million population, this segment of the population is of far greater importance to the state than numbers would indicate.<sup>1</sup>

The 1,400 commercial farms in New Mexico gross 274 million dollars annually and net nearly 100 million dollars while furnishing significant employment in the agricultural supply and marketing industries.<sup>2</sup> In addition to consuming large amounts of agricultural supplies and services, rural people are consumers of the same supplies and services as urban people.

Because agriculture plays such an important part directly and indirectly in the state's welfare, the Agricultural Information Department of New Mexico State University has been charged with supplying agricultural news to the newspapers of the state.

In order to better meet the need for agricultural news, this department has been interested in determining the extent to which agricultural news is used in New Mexico newspapers and whether modifications of news releases, and/or approach to newspaper editors, would facilitate use of agricultural news.

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<sup>1</sup> Summary Reports on New Mexico Resources, State Planning Office, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1966. p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> U.S.D.A. Statistical Reporting Service, Las Cruces, New Mexico. Mimeographed. January 20, 1966.

## II. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem. As the study was developed, the need became evident for an evaluation of editors' attitudes toward agricultural news based on (1) the amount of agricultural news editors were using, (2) the kinds of agricultural news most frequently used, (3) the sources of agricultural news, (4) the amounts of agricultural news editors planned to use in the future, and (5) the kinds of agricultural news editors planned to use most frequently.

Need for the Study. The decline in numbers of rural people and a corresponding increase in urban populations has resulted in less demand for the traditional agricultural news which primarily benefited the farmer and rancher.<sup>3</sup> Literature concerning the current evaluation of Extension's role revealed a need for agricultural news which will serve the urban segment of the population as well as the rural minority.

A dean of agriculture has indicated that universities have research and education to merchandise through communication, and communications media are the means used to bring this scientific and educational knowledge before the public.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census. U. S. Census of Population: 1960. Number of Inhabitants, New Mexico. Final Report PC (1)-33A. U.S. Gov. Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1960.

<sup>4</sup> L. L. Rummell, Communication in Public Relations, address, Amer. Assn. of Land Grant Colleges and State Univ., Washington, D.C., Nov. 12, 1958. (Printed.)

With regard to suburban people, Barcus has concluded that "there is a comparatively strong interest in and need for information which may be provided by agricultural extension agencies."<sup>5</sup>

Agricultural policy has become more and more a responsibility of urban people who may understand little of agriculture's problems or appreciate that a thriving economy is dependent on a strong agricultural base. Therefore, the need for agricultural news has become even greater than when the rural population controlled decisions affecting agricultural productivity. "An adequate supply of food and fiber is basic to human progress"<sup>6</sup> requiring that even urban people must realize that agriculture and progress are interrelated. "In a literal sense, agriculture is everybody's business -- its problems are everybody's problems -- its strength is the nation's strength."<sup>7</sup>

More and more, legislation, rulings, and decisions concerning farm and ranch production are made by an expanding urban majority. Since these urban people, as consumers, depend on agricultural products, reliable agricultural information is as vital to them as it is to the agriculturists who make a living from the soil.

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<sup>5</sup> Francis E. Barcus, Abstract of the Role of Agricultural Extension in the Suburban Community. Published report, Univ. of Mass., Amherst, Mass., Nov., 1962.

<sup>6</sup> Using Visuals in Agricultural Extension Programs, 4th in a Series, National Project in Agri. Communication, East Lansing, Mich., p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> George L. Mehren, Address by Assistant Sec. of Agri., Tex. Agri. Exp. Sta. Conference, College Sta., Tex., Oct. 9, 1964.

Greeneisen<sup>8</sup> and Knox<sup>9</sup> have stated that mass media, and particularly the newspaper, is the greatest source of agricultural information for both urban and rural peoples. Thus, it can be assumed that urban peoples derive their attitudes toward agriculture and base their decisions on what is or is not included in the mass media.

Wolfson found that newspaper editors govern the use of news in their newspapers.<sup>10</sup> The editor, then, is the first hurdle in reaching readers with agricultural news on farm problems and needs. What people may want to read about agriculture becomes secondary because the news available is determined by what the editor believes his public wants to read. Thus, it would seem more appropriate to determine editors' beliefs and attitudes toward agricultural news and the newspaper audience than to study audience use of mass media as did Taylor.<sup>11</sup>

The newspaper editor who makes decisions of what to include and what not to include in his newspaper columns becomes increasingly important to readers and to the agricultural journalist. Rierson stated that "Agriculture still is the basic

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<sup>8</sup> J. F. Greeneisen, Factors Associated with Use of the Mass Media by Illinois Farm Advisers. (Unpublished Master's thesis), Univ. of Ill., 1961.

<sup>9</sup> J. W. Knox, Relative Value of Mass Media in Extension, (Unpublished Master's report), Colorado State University, 1962.

<sup>10</sup> J. Wolfson, Agricultural News Handling in Urban and Rural Editions of Eight Midwest Metropolitan Dailies, (Unpublished Thesis), Iowa State Univ., 1961.

<sup>11</sup> Hal R. Taylor, A Study of Reading Interests, (Unpublished Master's thesis), Mich. State Univ., 1960.



industry of our economy and only by the use of accurate information can we plan and move ahead in this fast changing era."<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the agricultural journalist needs to know the newspaper editor. Does the editor believe that the total economy is related to the farm economy? Does he believe that agricultural news and information are important to rural and urban people alike? Does he believe that people formulating agricultural policy need to be "agriculturally informed" in order to make decisions which will ultimately benefit urban people as well as the producing "rural minority?" Or does the editor believe that because fewer people are involved directly in agriculture, fewer people are interested? Does he believe that there is little cause-effect relation between agriculture and the national economy and little interest generally in the shrinking rural population and decreasing number of farms?

Such attitudes affect the agricultural journalist's efficiency in reaching the reading public with agricultural information.

Objectives of Study. The objectives of the study were: (1) to determine the amount of agricultural news which editors are now using; (2) to determine what percentage of their readership they believe to be rural, urban and suburban; (3) to determine the various categories of agricultural news now printed and the sources; and (4) to determine what emphasis will be placed on various categories of agricultural news in the future.

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<sup>12</sup> Dallas Rierson, New Mexico Agri. Statistics, Vol. II, Las Cruces, New Mexico, Aug., 1963, p. 2.



Limitations of the Study. In the physical gathering of data, the study was limited to (1) measurement of agricultural news in the two large daily newspapers which blanket New Mexico and are major sources of agricultural news for New Mexico people; and (2) questionnaires returned to the writer from editors of New Mexico newspapers.

In the abstract sense, all the social sciences, including the communications media, are in their infancy compared with the natural sciences with regard to research tools for accurate data measurement; therefore, the communication field has certain general limitations that can be overcome only as more and more research helps to establish reference points that can be used in comparative measurements.

In order to overcome some of these limitations, a combination of research methods was used because as Westley stated, "The method of science is neither inductive nor deductive but a synthesis of the two."<sup>13</sup>

Schreier also states that it is important "for the statistical method and the clinical method (to) come to the same result."<sup>14</sup> The writer then concluded that by using a combination of research methods his findings would be strengthened more than by following Frisbee's<sup>15</sup> subjective method. Such combinations of techniques are discussed by several authors of research and methodology literature.

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<sup>13</sup> Bruce H. Westley, "Journalism Research and Scientific Method: I and II." *Journ. Quar.* Vol. 35, Nos. 2 & 3, 1958. p. 308.

<sup>14</sup> Fred T. Schreier, "Human Motivation: Probability and Meaning." *The Free Press*, Glencoe, Ill., 1957. p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> H. E. Frisbee, An Analysis of How Ohio Newspapers Handle Agricultural News, (Unpublished Master's thesis), Ohio State Uni., 1961.

The techniques used were generally those of Budd and Thorp.<sup>16</sup>

By using two separate techniques, the writer reasoned that one would serve as a check against the other in determining accuracy. Editors' attitudes toward agricultural news were determined through the use of a questionnaire. These attitudes were then checked by studying content of a sample of newspapers to determine whether the editors were or were not using the agricultural news they had indicated in the questionnaire.

By this method, it was expected that the accuracy of the answers to the questionnaire could be established.

The study was limited geographically to newspapers with major circulation within the State of New Mexico.

### III. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

Organization. The need for the study was discussed with the editor of the Agricultural Information Department at New Mexico State University and boundaries for the research problem were established.

Two techniques were adopted to enable a broad coverage in gathering information for the problem. They included (1) a questionnaire which served both as a descriptive valustional device and also a content analysis survey, and (2) a second content analysis study through a sampling of agricultural news published in New Mexico's two major newspapers.

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<sup>16</sup> Richard W. Budd and Robert K. Thorp, An Introduction to Content Analysis, State Univ. of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 1963.

Data from the newspaper sampling gave a general picture of current use of agricultural news and provided figures for comparison with some of those given by the editors' questionnaires. The questionnaire data served as a depth study for insight into the trends of agricultural news use in New Mexico newspapers and editors' attitudes.

Questionnaire. The questionnaire was reviewed by the Head of the Department of Journalism at Kansas State University and by the Head of the Department of Agricultural Information at New Mexico State University to determine whether questions were properly stated and answerable from an editor's viewpoint. Suggestions by these reviewers were incorporated into the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was entitled "How Does Your Newspaper Handle Agricultural News?" and was designed to provide answers to five basic questions:

1. How much space do New Mexico newspapers devote to agricultural news?
2. What categories of agricultural news frequent this space?
3. What are the major sources of agricultural news?
4. What emphasis will be placed on agricultural news in the future?
5. What shifts in emphasis, if any, will be made regarding various agricultural news categories?<sup>17</sup>

In addition to answering the preceding questions, the questionnaire was designed to gain insight into the training, educational level, journalism experience, and major news responsibility of the respondents so that relationships between these

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<sup>17</sup> A copy of the Questionnaire is to be found in the Appendix.

categories and agricultural news usage could be inferred from respondents' answers.

The questionnaires were mailed in February, 1965, to all of New Mexico's daily and weekly newspapers. Two of the daily newspapers were published outside New Mexico but were included because they had extensive circulation in New Mexico. Questionnaires were mailed on a weekend. However, the mail conditions in New Mexico are such that time of arrival of the questionnaires could not be determined. Mail, in some instances, takes as long as six days to reach parts of the state, while in other instances, as little as two days is required. Generally, it was assumed that the questionnaire would reach editors in midweek, rather than on the weekend when large amounts of mail were likely to accumulate unopened on editors' desks.

The questions were designed in most instances so that the respondents could complete the blanks with information readily available to them, or with merely a check mark to designate which of several multiple choice answers they selected.

The three-page questionnaire consisted of five general parts. The first part included four questions, and was designed to determine general information about each newspaper, its circulation, percentage of farm and ranch, urban and suburban subscribers; number of pages in an average issue of the newspaper; whether or not the newspaper carried regular agricultural columns; the amount and kind of agricultural information encompassed.

The second part of the questionnaire was designed to determine the specific categories of agricultural news most often used, and news sources. Space was included for additional comments which editors might wish to make regarding this

section.

The third part was designed to determine types of agricultural news which editors do not publish; whether the respondents preferred depth stories about an agricultural organization, or whether editors preferred news stories about elections of officers in an agricultural organization.

The fourth part of the questionnaire was designed to determine the emphasis editors placed on thirteen categories of agricultural news for the next ten year period. Respondents were requested to check whether they would place the same emphasis, less emphasis, or more emphasis on agricultural news in the categories of engineering, crops, animals, food marketing, food buying and nutrition, clothing, lawns and gardens, youth organizations, adult organizations, forestry and wildlife, conservation and resources, government programs and interrelationship of town and country. Space was allotted for editors to add categories and expected emphasis for kinds of agricultural news not listed in the questionnaire.

Part five was designed to determine the amounts of education of respondents, the amounts of journalism experience, and the amounts of agricultural experience, if any, of respondents. In addition, this section provided a place for the respondents to show whether agricultural journalism was a major or minor part of their work. Space was provided for the name of the newspaper, the name of the respondent, and the title of the respondent.

The Newspaper Sampling. In order to assure that the results of the study were not biased because of small samples, the mail questionnaire was sent to every



New Mexico newspaper and the content analysis sample was expanded to include twice the minimum sampling recommended by two leading authorities.

Berelson indicated in his classic text on sampling that "a small, carefully chosen sample of the relevant content will produce just as valid results as the analysis of a great deal more . . . "18

Budd and Thorp wrote that "small samples can be and have been used . . . to provide . . . information of a general nature, i.e., proportions of various kinds of content or percentages of one general category as compared to another."19 These authors referred to studies in which only twelve newspaper issues per year were analyzed. They reviewed studies which used three issues to represent one year's Sunday newspapers; 30 issues to portray a three-month period; ten days of evening newspapers to cover a two-and-one-half month period. Finally, the authors discussed an investigation drawing six, 12, 18, 24 and 48 size samples to represent one year to find whether small samples do an adequate job in content analysis. They concluded sample size beyond twelve per year for a daily newspaper does not produce significant differences in results.

While the preceding discussion would indicate that twelve issues of a newspaper would be adequate in sampling the agricultural news content for one year, twenty-four issues were used in each sampling in this study.

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18 Bernard Berelson, Content Analysis in Communication Research, The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1952. p. 174.

19 Richard W. Budd and Robert K. Thorp, An Introduction to Content Analysis, State Univ. of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 1963. p. 5.

The two large daily newspapers sampled for agricultural news content in this study were selected because they are the primary sources for agricultural news in New Mexico, the Albuquerque Journal serving the people of northern New Mexico and the El Paso (Texas) Times reaching people in southern New Mexico. The El Paso Times regularly publishes a New Mexico edition and retains news correspondents throughout its circulation area in New Mexico.

These two large newspapers are style-setters to varying degrees in the formats of smaller newspapers throughout the State of New Mexico, a situation fairly typical in the newspaper field in most areas of the nation. Stempel indicated that small town editors told him they used wire news stories in imitating the big city papers' displaying and editing of news.<sup>20</sup>

Mail editions of each of the newspapers were chosen for analysis since these are editions which reach both urban and rural readers in New Mexico. Sunday editions were not used since they often are not as "typical" as week-day editions, i. e., they contain special feature sections often written and printed much in advance of their distribution. For this reason and because few of the other daily newspapers in New Mexico have Sunday editions, week-day issues of more uniform content were employed for analytical study.

Twenty-four issues from each of the two daily newspapers over a one-year time span were analyzed for total newshole; agricultural news usage; total percentage agricultural news and agricultural news divided into the following categories (also

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<sup>20</sup> Guido H. Stempel III, Uniformity of Wire Content of Six Michigan Dailies, Journ. Quar. Vol. 36, No. 1, 1959, Article. pp. 45-48.



listed in the questionnaire): engineering (buildings, drainage, machinery), crops, animals, food marketing, food buying and nutrition, clothing, lawn and garden, youth organizations, adult organizations, forestry and wildlife, conservation of resources, government programs, interrelationship of town and country. It was also noted whether the article appeared in a special column, on a page of agricultural news or elsewhere in the newspaper.

To rotate sampling dates to insure equal distribution of days, two copies per month per newspaper were chosen at random dates divided between the six weekdays. A statistician tested the sampling procedure and found no bias.

#### IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of Problem. The role of the Land Grant College began soon after Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act of 1862 inaugurating the Land-Grant-College movement. The purpose of the Act was to extend higher education to thousands more people than formerly found university education opportunities open to them.

The 28th Legislative Assembly of New Mexico passed an Act in 1889 to establish New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts which was renamed New Mexico State University in 1960. The University was formed into four colleges, one of which was the College of Agriculture and Home Economics devoted to "practical instruction in agriculture, mechanic arts, and natural sciences connected therewith, as well as in all branches of learning bearing upon agricultural and industrial pursuits."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> New Mexico State University Bulletin, Vol. XLVI, No. 1, University Park, N. M., 1955-56. p. 225.

The agricultural college of New Mexico State University, in turn, is divided into the Extension Service, the Experiment Station, the Department of Agricultural Services, and Resident Instruction.

In 1887, Congress set aside money to add a state agricultural experiment station to each state agricultural college. A generation later, in 1914, the Extension Service came into being through the Smith Lever Act. Its role was to extend education to large numbers of people on an informal, voluntary, out-of-classroom basis. Specifically, in accordance with the Act, state and federal funds were to be used cooperatively to disseminate findings of university research to all the people. At the time the legislation was enacted, the population of New Mexico and the nation was largely rural and, traditionally, Extension Service workers have reached toward the farm population.

Agriculture, taken as an entity, still remains as New Mexico's most important single industry. However, the number of people engaged directly in agricultural production continues to decline, while the total population of the state, both urban and rural non-farm, has increased. This decline in farm population is a part of a national trend.

Livestock farms are the most numerous type of farm in New Mexico. These account for about 27 percent<sup>22</sup> of all farms while cotton is the most valuable crop with about 13 percent<sup>23</sup> of the farms producing cotton. Four percent produce cash-

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<sup>22</sup> Using Visuals in Agri. Ext. Programs. pp. 8-9.

<sup>23</sup> Bulletin 438, A Statistical History of Crop and Livestock Production in New Mexico, Agri. Exp. Sta., N.M.S.U., May, 1959. p. 5.

grain and one percent other field crops. Five percent of the farms are dairy farms, three percent fruit and vegetable farms and the remainder are unclassified or classified as "miscellaneous."

Cattle are the chief class of livestock on New Mexico farms with more than one million head of cattle and calves, or an average of 55 head per farm. Nearly thirty percent of the farms, however, have no cattle or calves.

While the number of cattle and calves has remained fairly constant, with exceptions of adjustments because of drought and low prices, the number of farms with this class of livestock has declined. For instance, the total number of cattle farms declined from 23,600 in 1950 to 21,070 in 1954.<sup>24</sup>

Sheep are the second most important class of livestock on New Mexico farms and in a few counties they are as important as cattle. Compared with cattle and sheep, other classes of livestock are relatively unimportant.

In terms of acreage, the principal crops grown in New Mexico, in order of importance, are: sorghums, cotton, hay, wheat, dry beans, broom corn, corn, barley, fruits and nuts, vegetables and oats. Sorghums, alfalfa and other hay, cotton, and wheat account for about 80 percent of all cropland.

Government policy has had a marked effect on acreage and production of at least two crops, cotton and wheat. Acreages have been reduced by marketing quotas. Livestock numbers also have been reduced on Bureau of Land Management lands and

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

on Forest Service lands. At the same time price supports on such crops as sorghums have resulted in increased production.

Although predominately an agricultural state, New Mexico has followed the pattern of other states in its population shift from rural to urban. "The people" are no longer a predominately rural population. Then, since the role of the Extension Service is to "help people help themselves,"<sup>25</sup> it follows that Extension information specialists must shift their aim from rural Americans to all people in the population.

Communications Studies. Responsible people throughout the Extension Service, whether Federal personnel in Washington, D. C., research and other members of agricultural universities, or agents at county and district levels, have in the past few years taken a fresh look at the changing population and economy and the role of the Extension Service. Reviewing rural-urban population changes and the traditional methods of the Extension Service in serving the people of the United States, they have begun searching for desirable modifications to accomplish Extension's role. In fact, "one consistent characteristic of Extension work has been the necessity to shift programs and methods to meet ever-changing conditions and demands."<sup>26</sup>

Information people in the Extension Service at Agricultural Land Grant Colleges especially have been concerned with dissemination of useful information to a rapidly-changing audience. To diffuse helpful information effectively to the people

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<sup>25</sup> Using Visuals in Agri. Ext., op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> The Cooperative Ext. Serv. Today -- A Statement of Scope and Responsibility, April, 1958. p. 5.

is impossible through personal contact alone, and so publications and communication through the mass media have been and are a vital part of the Extension program. Prior to the establishment of the Cooperative Extension system, the agricultural bulletin was the principal method employed to inform the public of scientific research.

Since use of mass media increases the Extension worker's efficiency in disseminating useful information and also extends the information to more of the people, the information specialists of the Agricultural Information Departments of the Extension Service have an imposing job.

Extension workers use a variety of communication channels which are usually grouped under the mass media heading. Studies have been conducted as to the effectiveness of each one. Whether to inform, persuade or motivate, the newspaper with its potential to reach larger numbers of people than many of the other methods remains one of the most important communication tools. The Beal-Bohlen Summary reported that newspapers and other mass media were very important in carrying new ideas to people.<sup>27</sup> In the flow of communications, mass media may serve influentially by reaching opinion leaders who in turn relay the content to associates.

As would be expected in states with large land areas of sparse populations, New Mexico supports few newspapers. Arizona has 45 newspapers, Utah 54, and Colorado 136.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> George M. Beal and Joe M. Bohlen, Increasing Understanding of Public Problems and Policies, 1956: An Analysis of 35 Research Studies Conducted over the past 20 years in the U. S.

<sup>28</sup> William F. McCallister, Directory Newspapers and Periodicals. 1965, N. W. Ayers and Sons, Philadelphia, Penn., 1965. pp. 1250-1340.



A current list of newspapers, both weekly and daily, showed 57 New Mexico organizations which could be classified as bona fide newspapers with subscription lists. Of these, 34 were weeklies and 23 were dailies. There have been a number of "shopper's guides" printed in various New Mexico towns, house organ types of newspapers, and religious publications, but these have not been included in this study.

It almost goes without saying that part of the Extension information specialist's efficiency is knowing and understanding the newspaper network and news flow pattern of the area he serves; in this study the area was the State of New Mexico.

Schramm's study of Oregon newspapers solidifies the assumption that the two large daily newspapers herein analyzed do form the basic New Mexico newspaper network since "the larger the city, the more likely it is to generate news . . . and support a larger paper which can then . . . serve more people who have diverging news interests."<sup>29</sup>

In the whole field of communication -- without and within the Extension framework -- surveys of types of stories used and the audience toward which stories are aimed have been made in an effort to improve communication efficiency. Studies have been made on readability, semantics, color use in format, typography and the effect of each in the use of material by editors. These categories were not included in this study.

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<sup>29</sup> Wilbur Schramm, Newspapers of a State as a News Network. Article. Journ. Quar. Vol. 35 No. 2, 1958. pp. 180-1.

Literature in the field revealed that the communications media, along with the other social sciences, are in their infancy compared with the natural sciences in development of research tools for accurate data measurement. Therefore, the communication field has certain weaknesses in any measurement of such abstract qualities as "audience, readability and editorial intent." Also, in this field of research, there are many variables which cannot be controlled by the research worker. Thus, communications studies give general rather than exact impressions of phases of mass media.

However, even in an inexact field, information of any kind, to benefit any individual, must first reach him; and transmitting useful information is Extension's monumental task. To fulfill this role adequately, Extension personnel must continue to look for the best ways to disseminate news and information from the Land Grant universities to the people.

Assuming that newspapers are still the over-all most effective tool of mass communication for the Extension purpose, the Extension information specialist then must find the best means of using them. White found a direct relationship between the amount of agricultural news printed and the editor's opinion of news value of agricultural news.<sup>30</sup> White, as well as Tichenor,<sup>31</sup> concluded that channeling news

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<sup>30</sup> J. H. White, Factors that Influence the Use or Non-Use of Agricultural News in Illinois Non-Metropolitan Daily Newspapers, (Unpublished Master's thesis), U. of Ill., 1961.

<sup>31</sup> P. J. Tichenor, Farm Research Articles: Mailing to County Agents vs. Mailing Direct to Editors, Ext. Methods Series No. 3, Univ. of Minn., 1959.



releases through a county agricultural agent or farm advisor has little effect on whether or not news releases are published by a newspaper editor. These and other studies show that timing, length or readability also have little effect on use of the news release.<sup>32</sup>

Since research indicates that the final determinant is the editor, and since the news writing, timing or distribution apparently are not key factors in their use, then the agricultural journalist must be concerned with editors' attitudes and he must attempt to determine and appraise these regarding agricultural news flow.

The journalist may ponder how reliable the editor's newspaper is in accuracy of presentation and breadth of news offered readers. Does the editor know who his readers are? Is the editor concerned with the readers' needs and desires for information? Does the editor feel responsible in providing varied information to meet such needs? Is the editor aware of the changing society, with its shifts in population, urbanization and agriculture-industry economics?

Literature in both the agriculture and communications fields is reassuring. Books, abstracts and articles show that editors and publishers, writers and journalism teachers are aware of the perpetually changing society with its population-economy shifts.

Dearborn wrote that editors feel a responsibility which includes printing news

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<sup>32</sup> P. J. Tichenor, The Effect of Length Upon Usage of Agricultural Press Releases in Weekly Newspapers, (Unpublished Master's thesis), U. of Wisc., 1956.

in depth for their readers.<sup>33</sup>

Peterson compared circulation and population growth in the past twenty years in his study for newspaper editors and publishers of the newspaper audience.<sup>34</sup> He found a similar rise in birth rate and newspaper circulation. Other studies concerning audience and public needs have been conducted by newspaper and university persons. A USDA summary detailed the change through the years in university Extension releases: from aim toward individual farm to a general audience; from reports about persons, awards and announcements to stories of research about persons, to stories of research reports, explaining technology and research results.<sup>35</sup>

Smith approached his study from the reading-audience viewpoint to determine how effective several forms of mass media were to readers.<sup>36</sup>

Journalists, editors and teachers in the communications field are constantly reappraising efforts toward adequately and accurately informing the public. Often, studies are conducted to find how reliable, effective and important is the newspaper as a news and information source. Thomas and Evans summarized four studies on

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<sup>33</sup> Tom Dearborn, "The Growing Responsibility of the Small Town Press." Article, Nieman Reports, 15:2, April, 1961.

<sup>34</sup> Wilbur Peterson, "Is Daily Circulation Keeping Pace with the Nation's Growth?" Article. Journ. Quar. Vol. 36, No. 3, 1949.

<sup>35</sup> Editor's Letter, Apr. 19, 1961. USDA Fed. Ext. Ser.

<sup>36</sup> G. C. Smith, Relative Value of Mass Media in Agricultural Extension Work, (Professional Paper), Colo. State Univ., 1958.

where farmers obtained agricultural news and information showing that newspapers were one regular source.<sup>37</sup>

While there is a sizeable accumulation of literature in communication-related subjects, little research has been done with regard to editor attitudes.

An early study by Goss was conducted in Vermont which showed what agricultural news releases from the University of Vermont College of Agriculture were used by Vermont newspapers, and what editors wanted and needed in the way of college news releases.<sup>38</sup> This research utilized an eight-week content analysis clipping survey and mail questionnaires from editors for correlated data.

Wolfson conducted a one-month content analysis for rural and city editions of seven major morning newspapers in a seven-state area for data on agricultural news usage, and followed this survey with personal interviews with the newspaper editors.<sup>39</sup>

## V. RESEARCH RESULTS

Questionnaire Data. A need, as outlined earlier in the discussion of the problem, was evident for determining the amount of agricultural news editors use,

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<sup>37</sup> SaAnn J. Thomas and James F. Evans, "Where Farmers Get Information," Exten. Agri. Communications Research Report No. 14, Coll. of Agri., Urbana, Ill., 1963.

<sup>38</sup> G. Goss, "The Use of Agri. News in the Vermont Press," (Unpublished Master's thesis). Review of ext. res., 1955.

<sup>39</sup> Wolfson, Loc. cit.

frequency of use and sources of the varied agricultural news categories, and editors' plans for agricultural news usage in the future. Generally, questionnaire answers provided the means for the agricultural journalist to know the editor better -- they gave an inexact but composite picture of the newspaper and the person who edits agricultural news.

A copy of the questionnaire and a list of all New Mexico newspapers with notations indicating questionnaire respondents are located in the Appendix.

Of the 57 questionnaires mailed to all New Mexico newspapers, 30 were returned, giving a sampling of more than 52 percent. Of these questionnaires, 34 were mailed to weekly newspapers, with 16 returned for a response of 47 percent; and 23 were mailed to the daily newspapers with 14 returned for a response of more than 60 percent.

The mailing list included all of the New Mexico newspapers except house organs, religious publications and non-subscription "shoppers guides."

Respondents answering the questionnaires were not always the persons to whom the envelopes were addressed, but respondents indicated that they were the persons who made judgments about the amounts and kinds of agricultural news used in their newspapers. Question nine of the questionnaire was designed to provide background information about editors' experience and education, and the proportion of their work loads made up from agricultural news work.

All but three of the weekly newspaper respondents who filled in the portion of the questionnaire dealing with education indicated they had two years or more of college. Four of these had finished four years of college, two had completed five

years of college, two had finished 3-1/2 years of college and two had attended college two years. Two had ended formal education with high school and one had completed only two years of high school. Three weekly newspaper respondents did not answer this portion of the questionnaire.

All but one of the respondents for daily newspapers had attended college: one had finished high school; seven had completed four years of college; one had finished five years of college; two had completed two years of college; and one had ended college study after one year.

Of all the respondents completing this portion of the questionnaire, more than one-half had completed college and 86 percent had attended some college classes.

Journalism experience ranged from one to 37 years for the weekly newspaper respondents and three to 35 years for the daily newspaper respondents. Of all respondents, 13 had 20 years or more of journalism experience, 10 had 10 to 20 years, and five had fewer than 10 years.

Only three respondents for weekly newspapers indicated they had agricultural experience. One reported two years of agricultural experience, another 17 years, and another 22 years. Six of the daily newspaper respondents claimed agricultural experience and reported two years, four years, 10 years, 16 years, 20 years and 25 years respectively.

Only three respondents indicated that agricultural news was a major responsibility of staff persons. One of these was a daily newspaper editor and the other two were editors of weekly newspapers. One daily newspaper editor reported that agricultural news responsibility fell "somewhere between major and minor" in his



job.

The first four questions of the questionnaire (discussed more fully in this paper in the section on method of procedure) gave a general view of the newspapers in the study and the averages of format and newshole, readership and agricultural news carried for a composite picture of the New Mexico weekly and daily newspapers.

Specifically, circulation of daily newspapers ranged, according to respondents answers, from 2,500 to 15,000 for those outside the metropolitan areas. A majority was in the 3,000 to 5,000 circulation range.

Of the two metropolitan dailies responding, the Albuquerque Journal stated a daily circulation of 60,000 and the El Paso (Texas) Times a daily circulation of 60,000.

Circulation of weekly newspapers ranged from 1,000 to 4,300. Approximately 75 percent of the weekly newspapers responding had circulations of 3,000 or less. All of the weekly newspapers were published once a week, except two which published twice weekly.

Weekly newspaper editors estimated their farm readership in a range of 10 percent to 72 percent of their total subscription lists, while editors of daily newspapers estimated their farm readership considerably lower. The range for daily newspapers was one percent up to 40 percent. One newspaper, the Hobbs Daily News-Sun, returned with the questionnaire an Audit Bureau of Circulation report substantiating its circulation of 8,663 as being one percent farm and ranch, two percent suburban and 97 percent urban.

A majority of the daily newspaper editors estimated their farm readership as being 20 percent or less of their total circulation. Urban subscribers were listed as making up the major portion of daily newspaper subscription lists except in one instance where the editor estimated his circulation to be divided evenly between urban, suburban, and farm-ranch people.

The number of pages per issue for weekly newspapers varied from 6 to 24 with the majority printing 8 or 10 pages. For the daily newspapers, the respondents outside the metropolitan areas reported a range of 6 to 22 pages for each issue with a majority reporting average issues of 8 or 12 pages. Of the metropolitan newspapers, the Albuquerque Journal reported an average of 65 pages per issue, and the El Paso Times 44 pages per issue.

All of the respondents from daily newspapers indicated that their newspapers were standard-sized with eight columns.

Most weekly newspapers reported eight columns per page. One weekly newspaper reported five columns per page, another nine columns, and two reported seven columns per page. Only one weekly editor indicated that his newspaper was tabloid size.

Daily newspapers outside the metropolitan areas reported the number of column inches of news in each issue within a range of 450 to 1,760. Of the metropolitan dailies, the El Paso Times reported an average of 1,980 column inches of news per issue; the Albuquerque Journal respondent failed to answer this question on the questionnaire.



The average newshole for each issue of the Albuquerque Journal (discussed in the section "Newspaper Sampling") was 1,886 column inches. Average newshole per issue of the El Paso Times was 1,659 column inches.

Only nine weekly newspaper respondents answered the question on number of column inches. Of these, the lowest was 320 column inches per issue; the highest was 800; and the average was 552 column inches.

Of the non-metropolitan dailies, only two carried regular farm-ranch pages and these were once per week; one carried a weekly garden page. Four other daily newspaper respondents reported their newspapers regularly carried agricultural columns ranging in length from one full column a week up to six full columns a week.

Ten other respondents, however, reported their newspapers used agricultural news throughout the issues, ranging from 22 column inches up to 44 column inches in one week's issues. All of the daily newspaper respondents indicated their newspapers used some agricultural news.

None of the weekly newspaper respondents reported a regular farm or ranch page in their newspapers. Eleven weekly newspaper respondents reported that agricultural news was used regularly in their newspapers; three reported regular agricultural and homemaking columns written by county agents and home agents; and nine weekly newspaper respondents reported some kinds of regular agricultural columns were used in their newspapers but they did not specify who wrote them or the sources. Three indicated that regular garden columns were carried in each issue and two wrote that food buying columns were utilized regularly.

One weekly newspaper respondent said that he did not use any agricultural news, "unless something out of the ordinary." Although the remainder of the weekly newspaper respondents did not answer directly that their newspapers printed agricultural news regularly, other answers which they checked throughout the questionnaire indicated that they did utilize agricultural news.

The two metropolitan dailies each ran once-a-week farm and garden pages. The Albuquerque Journal ran a once-a-week food page while the El Paso Times did not.

The second part of the questionnaire (question five) gave information on use of agricultural news by specific categories and sources for agricultural news. Although some overlapping of material results when a subject area was subdivided, the agricultural news categories listed in the questionnaire gave an adequately lucid picture of types of agricultural news desired by editors to be useful to the agricultural journalist.

Category divisions and explanation of coverage of each was as follows:

Engineering included stories about design of agricultural structures from farm houses and buildings to irrigation systems; farmstead layout and drainage; machinery and maintenance; and fuel storage.

Crops covered stories concerning production, harvesting and marketing of crops; crop diseases and insects, and their control; fertilization; experimental results on crop fertility, insects and diseases; and crop utilization.

Animals included stories on production and marketing of meat animals, poultry and eggs, milk and wool.

Food marketing stories disseminated economic information and were aimed primarily at producers, although the information might also be valuable to consumers. This category also included stories on innovations in marketing and economical or new methods of marketing.

Food buying and nutrition stories were aimed primarily at consumers (which included people in agriculture). This category included news stories on plentiful seasonal supplies and how to use such products for good nutrition.

Clothing stories encompassed the economics of fabric selection, style and research information -- this information was generally oriented toward fibers produced agriculturally but also included implications on the use of "man-made" fibers.

Lawn and garden division included stories on planning, preparation and maintenance of homegrounds and gardens, as well as stories on the organization and activities of garden clubs.

Youth organizations encompassed all news stories about the organization, activities, accomplishments of all agriculturally-oriented and organized youth groups such as 4-H, Future Farmers of America, Future Homemakers of America, Junior Vegetable Growers, and youth divisions within livestock breed organizations.

Adult organizations included news stories about the organization, activities and accomplishments of all agriculturally-oriented and organized adult groups such as Farm Bureau, Extension Homemakers Clubs and breed associations.

Forestry and wildlife stories gave information of national and state forests; production of lumber; forest management; and information about game and fish and also game and fish department activities.

Conservation of resources contained stories about conserving resources for production and recreation, and generally included stories from information supplied by the Soil Conservation Service and conservation districts, and the Extension Service.

Government programs encompassed stories containing information on changes and interpretation of the various agricultural programs administered by Federal, State and, in some instances, County governments as well as stories concerning laws enacted by the New Mexico State Legislature or the United States Congress which affected agriculture directly and the total economy indirectly.

Interrelationship of town and country category contained news stories written either about rural conditions and people for urban-suburban readers, or stories about urbanites written for rural readers; these generally centered around organized activities which called attention to the interdependence of urban-rural people, economy or other mutually beneficial conditions.

Information on use of agricultural news from the questionnaires is listed in Table 1. The data was tabulated from 15 of 16 weekly newspaper respondents' answers and 13 of 14 daily newspaper respondents' replies to the questionnaire concerning types of agricultural news used in their newspapers.

The news subjects are listed in Table 1 as they ranked in preference for use by respondents in their publications. Tables 2 and 3 give in declining order the frequency of use of each agricultural news category by the daily and weekly newspapers.

Table 1. Use by New Mexico newspapers of various categories of agricultural news.\*

Category	Weeklies	Dailies	Total
Youth Organizations	13	12	25
Adult Organizations	12	10	22
Conservation of Resources	8	11	19
Crops	6	12	18
Forestry and Wildlife	7	10	17
Government Programs	6	11	17
Animals	6	10	16
Food Marketing	6	9	15
Food Buying and Nutrition	7	7	14
Lawn and Garden	7	7	14
Clothing	6	7	13
Engineering	3	8	11
Interrelationship of Town and Country	3	5	8

\* Tabulated from respondents' replies to question number five on questionnaire. Numerals represent the number of newspapers which utilized the various news categories.

Table 2. Frequency of use by New Mexico daily newspapers of agricultural news categories.

Category	Order of Use
Youth Organizations	First*
Crops	First
Government Programs	Second*
Conservation of Resources	Second
Animals	Third*
Adult Organizations	Third
Forestry and Wildlife	Third
Food Marketing	Fourth
Engineering	Fifth
Clothing	Sixth*
Lawn and Garden	Sixth
Food Buying and Nutrition	Sixth
Interrelationship of Town and Country	Sixth

\* Tied with one or more other categories for this place in frequency of use by newspapers.



Table 3. Frequency of use by New Mexico weekly newspapers of agricultural news categories.

Category	Order of Use
Youth Organizations	First
Adult Organizations	Second
Conservation of Resources	Third
Forestry and Wildlife	Fourth*
Lawn and Garden	Fourth
Food Buying and Nutrition	Fourth
Crops	Fifth*
Animals	Fifth
Food Marketing	Fifth
Clothing	Fifth
Government Programs	Fifth
Engineering	Sixth*
Interrelationship of Town and Country	Sixth

\* Tied with one or more other categories for this place in frequency of use by newspapers.



News about youth and adult organizations was most frequently checked by respondents in the combined tabulation of kinds of agricultural news used by daily and weekly newspapers. (See Table 1.) News of youth organizations ranked slightly higher than news about adult organizations for both weekly and daily newspapers.

The total of all answers showed news about conservation of resources ranked next to organization news, while interrelationship of town and country ranked lowest.

Differences were noted between daily and weekly newspapers in their use of various categories of agricultural news with the most notable difference being that while the weekly newspapers showed a clearly marked preference for one category of agricultural news over another in first, second and third instances, the daily newspapers printed news in many categories with almost equal frequency. (See Tables 2 and 3.) Weekly newspaper respondents ranked conservation of resources in third place next to news of youth and adult organizations; they ranked food buying, lawns and gardens, forestry and wildlife equally in fourth place. Daily newspapers ranked crops with youth organizations as most frequently-used news; government programs and conservation of resources second; news about animals and about adult organizations equally in third place with forestry and wildlife.

All daily newspaper respondents except two and all weekly newspaper respondents except one checked the various categories according to usage in their newspapers.

Along with the agricultural news story categories, editors were asked to give sources for each type story. Table 4 lists agricultural news sources named in the questionnaires; 12 weekly newspaper respondents checked sources used for agri-

Table 4. Frequency of mention of sources of agricultural news.

Source	Weeklies	Dailies	Total
U. S. Department of Agriculture	2	2	4
New Mexico State University	33	30	63
U. S. Forest Service	4	6	10
Youth Organization Reporters	4	4	8
Adult Organization Reporters	7	5	12
County Agent	20	33	53
County Home Agent	4	6	10
Newspaper Staffs	14	14	28
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service	1	3	4
Soil Conservation Service	5	10	15
New Mexico Farm Bureau	1	0	1
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish	3	5	8
Wire Services	0	14	14
Chamber of Commerce	0	1	1

cultural news and 11 daily newspaper respondents named sources of agricultural news. Of the 14 sources given by the newspaper respondents, the frequency of use varied somewhat between the daily and weekly newsmen. The daily newspaper respondents named the sources in the order given in Table 5. The weekly newspaper respondents named sources in the order shown in Table 6.

Table 5. Ranking of agricultural news sources by daily newspapers.

Source	Rank
County Agent	First
New Mexico State University	Second
Newspaper Staffs	Third*
Wire Services	Third
Soil Conservation Service	Fourth
U. S. Forest Service	Fifth*
County Home Agent	Fifth
Adult Organization Reporters	Sixth*
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish	Sixth
Youth Organization Reporters	Seventh
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service	Eighth
U. S. Department of Agriculture	Ninth
Chamber of Commerce	Tenth

\* Source tied with another in frequency.

Table 6. Ranking of agricultural news sources by weekly newspapers.

Source	Rank
New Mexico State University	First
County Agent	Second
Newspaper Staffs	Third
Adult Organization Reporters	Fourth
Soil Conservation Service	Fifth
U. S. Forest Service	Sixth*
Youth Organization Reporters	Sixth
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish	Seventh
U. S. Department of Agriculture	Eighth
New Mexico Farm Bureau	Ninth*
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service	Ninth

\* Source tied with another in frequency.

A total of all respondents' answers showed New Mexico State University most frequently used as a source of agricultural news. County agents ranked second and newspaper staff writers ranked third as sources.

Differences in frequency of mention of agricultural news sources were noted between daily newspaper respondents and weekly newspaper respondents. For the daily newspapers, the county agent was mentioned 33 times as a source and New Mexico State University was mentioned 30 times. Respondents for weekly newspapers mentioned New Mexico State University as a source 33 times and the county agent 20 times. Wire services and newspaper staffs ranked equally in third place for daily newspapers as sources of agricultural information, followed closely by the Soil Conservation Service. Weekly newspapers, none of which apparently subscribed to wire services, ranked their own staffs next to New Mexico State University and county agents as sources of agricultural information. Weeklies ranked Soil Conservation Service in fifth place but depended more heavily on adult and youth organization reporters as sources than did daily newspapers.

The third part of the questionnaire included questions six and seven and provided information to give insight into editors' feelings on types of news stories that were unacceptable for use. For handling or treatment of agricultural subject matter, a depth story and election of officers story were listed as choices. This gave editors a concrete example upon which to make editorial choice and comment.

In answer to the question "Are there types of agricultural news which you do not use?", respondents most frequently mentioned stories without local interest. Comments included: "Very little," "Generalized stories without local peg," "Stories

on crops not grown in our area, "Canned," and "All must have local angle." The respondent for the Los Alamos Monitor, a newspaper that serves a community of atomic energy researchers, replied that he did not use any stories pertaining to farming or ranching. No significant differences were noted between replies of daily and weekly respondents in comments on kinds of agricultural news not used.

Both weekly and daily respondents showed a preference for news about an election of officers for an organization over a depth story about the purpose of the organization. Seven of the twelve respondents answering this question for the daily newspapers favored an election of officers story, four preferred a depth story, and two said they would use either with no preference.

One weekly newspaper respondent and one daily newspaper respondent commented that lack of space prevented using depth stories.

The fourth part of the questionnaire (question eight) gave data on editors' future plans for the use of and emphasis on agricultural news.

Respondents to the questionnaires representing dailies varied somewhat on the emphasis they planned to place on various categories of agricultural news in the future when answers were contrasted against weekly respondents' data.

Of the respondents for daily newspapers, six expressed plans to place more emphasis in the next 10 years on food buying and nutrition, while five said their projected course of action would place the same emphasis as in the past. Eleven said they would place the same emphasis on both youth and adult organizations, while two wrote that both groups' activities would receive more emphasis. Two respondents specified they planned less emphasis on agricultural engineering; five would



enlarge on present emphasis, and six would remain static. One visualized less emphasis on government programs, eight said they would maintain the "same" emphasis, and four proposed to publish "more" of news in this area. Two respondents for dailies did not answer the question.

Of the weekly newspaper respondents, seven expressed plans to increase emphasis on youth organizations; one planned to diminish emphasis; and five indicated no change in their present program of usage. For adult organizations, seven would continue with an equal amount, four would add more, and one would reduce the amount of this type of news that is printed.

Concerning food buying and nutrition news, two weekly newspaper respondents specified enlarged emphasis, four would remain the same, and one proposed to lessen use of this category. Four said they planned diminished emphasis on agricultural engineering in the future, while three would maintain their present usage and one would decrease use of this category. One weekly respondent said his course of action would place less emphasis on all agricultural news except lawns and gardens and that he expected to place the same emphasis on that category as he had in the past.

Taking the total answers from daily and weekly newspaper respondents, tallies entitled "same emphasis" and those headed "more emphasis" were nearly the same in the agricultural news categories of engineering, crops, animals, food buying and nutrition, conservation and resources. Few changes in emphasis were indicated for food marketing, clothing, lawns and garden, youth organizations, adult organizations, forestry and wildlife, and interrelationship of town and country.

Newspaper Sampling. Samples of the two metropolitan dailies which circulate widely in New Mexico were studied to indicate accuracy of respondents' estimates of agricultural news handling. This study comprised a stratified sample of 24 issues each of the Albuquerque Journal and the El Paso Times. Sampling started April 12, 1965, and ran through March 24, 1966. Only Monday through Saturday editions were utilized, and these were selected so that the same number of issues was analyzed for each day of the week.

A list of the dates of issues sampled is included in the Appendix of this paper.

Table 7 lists the agricultural news categories and column inches found in the sampling of the El Paso Times; Table 8 gives the agricultural news subjects and column inches from the Albuquerque Journal study.

Table 7. Categories of agricultural news used in the  
El Paso Times.

Category	Column Inches*
Animals	217
Crops	147
Government Programs	121
Conservation of Resources	113
Adult Organizations	67
Lawn and Garden	47
Food Marketing	33
Food Buying and Nutrition	29
Forestry and Wildlife	28
Youth Organizations	9
Engineering	---
Clothing	---
Interrelationship of Town and Country	---
Other	56

\* Numerals represent the column inches of news in 24 issues.

Table 8. Categories of agricultural news used in the  
Albuquerque Journal.

Category	Column Inches*
Conservation of Resources	412
Animals	388
Crops	260
Food Marketing	164
Adult Organizations	140
Food Buying and Nutrition	138
Youth Organizations	90
Government Programs	54
Forestry and Wildlife	41
Lawn and Garden	26
Interrelationship of Town and Country	12
Clothing	---
Engineering	---

\* Numerals represent the column inches of news in 24 issues.

Total newshole for the Albuquerque Journal was 44,263 column inches for the 24 issues considered in the sampling for an average of 1,886 column inches per issue.

Total newshole for the El Paso Times for the 24 issues studied was 39,813 column inches, or an average of 1,659 column inches per issue.

The Albuquerque Journal, which set down a farm and ranch readership of 10 percent of its 60,000 weekday circulation, devoted four percent of its space to agricultural news. The El Paso Times, which stated a farm and ranch readership of 20 percent of its 65,000 weekday circulation, devoted two percent of its space to agricultural news.

Employing the agricultural news categories from the questionnaire, each of the two newspapers was studied for emphasis on the basis of column inches devoted to each category.

Conservation of resources, animals, and crops news stories were among the four top-ranking places of agricultural news subjects of both newspapers as shown in Tables 7 and 8. The Albuquerque Journal devoted the most space to conservation of resources, while the El Paso Times devoted the most space to animals. Substantially more space was given adult organizations in both newspapers than was devoted to youth organizations. Government programs ranked higher in use in the El Paso Times than in the Albuquerque Journal.

No stories on clothing or on engineering were observed in either of the newspaper samples.

Generally, the emphasis on the various categories as measured in column inches in the two newspapers coincided with the usage all respondents indicated in answering the mail questionnaires.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

Results of this study tended to show that: (1) agricultural news with local names had the widest appeal to all New Mexico editors; (2) certain categories of agricultural news appealed more to daily newspaper editors than to weekly newspaper editors; (3) agricultural news took a minor role in most editorial offices of both weekly and daily newspapers; (4) New Mexico State University with its field staff of county extension workers was the single most important source of agricultural news; (5) farm and ranch readership, as estimated by respondents, was larger percentage-wise for smaller newspapers than for larger newspapers; (6) all New Mexico newspapers used some kinds of agricultural news; (7) little change in agricultural news usage was planned for the future; (8) any change in usage would generally be toward more agricultural news; (9) smaller daily newspapers tended to follow the example of metropolitan dailies more than did weekly newspapers in agricultural news usage; (10) livestock, crops, adult organizations, and conservation news were the categories most likely to be used when agricultural news competed for space with the "hard" news of the day; and (11) editors had high levels of educational training but little agricultural experience.

The questionnaire data implied that editors know their readers, and obviously feel responsible for providing varied information (including agricultural news) to all



readers. Editorial use of news stories on government programs and stories on interrelationship of city and rural communities indicated that editors were concerned with educating the general reader, whether rural or urban, with the agricultural situation.

Since the study also indicates that editors' attitudes regarding agricultural news affect the flow of agricultural news and information, the agricultural journalist might utilize news categories which are more popular with the editors in combination with less popular agricultural subjects when the two can be rationally interrelated in a single news story. Naturally, the agricultural journalist could also make greater use of the most frequently printed categories of agricultural news.

It could also be implied from these conclusions that usage of less popular agricultural categories could be increased if local names were included.

Results also showed that suppliers of agricultural news could take into account greater use of wire services as a fast means of distribution for those agricultural news categories which have successfully competed with non-agricultural news.

Since few of New Mexico's newspapers had farm and ranch pages, agricultural news generally had to compete with non-agricultural news -- a situation that implies further study of "quality" of writing compared to relative importance of subject matter.

The results also tended to show that suppliers of agricultural news fulfilled a need of both daily and weekly newspapers, that New Mexico editors generally believed their supply of agricultural news was adequate and that they planned little change in emphasis of agricultural news in the future.

The study implied that editors generally were open-minded toward reliable agricultural news and that they were cooperative in working with agricultural agencies in getting agricultural information to readers.

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## APPENDIX

Letter Sent with Questionnaire\*

In an effort to find out how New Mexico newspapers handle agricultural news, I am sending questionnaires to the newspapers in the state.

These questionnaires have two purposes: to help the New Mexico State University Agricultural Extension Service adjust its news service to the changing needs of New Mexico newspapers; and to provide material for my M. S. thesis.

Will you please ask the person who handles agricultural news (or the editor) for your newspaper to fill out the enclosed questionnaire?

Thanks for your cooperation.

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\* Handwritten notes were sent with the follow-up questionnaire mailing.



### New Mexico Newspapers

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<u>Daily Newspapers</u>	<u>Weekly Newspapers</u>
Alamogordo News*	Otero County Star* (Alamogordo)
Albuquerque Tribune	Valley News* (Anthony)
Albuquerque Journal*	Aztec Independent Review*
Artesia Daily Press*	Lincoln County News* (Carrizozo)
Belen News Bulletin*	Union County Leader (Clayton)
Carlsbad Current-Argus*	Curry County Times* (Clovis)
Clovis News Journal	Deming Graphic and Headlight
Herald Post** (El Paso, Texas)	Dexter Tribune
Farmington Daily Times*	Jicarilla Chieftain (Dulce)
Gallup Daily Independent*	Eunice Star
Grants Daily Beacon*	DeBaca County News (Ft. Sumner)
Hobbs Daily News-Sun*	Hagerman Star
Las Cruces Sun-News	Hatch Independent
Las Vegas Optic*	Hobbs Flare*
Lovington Daily Leader*	Jal Record

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\* Indicates this newspaper's respondent returned the mail questionnaire either initially or after the follow-up distribution of the questionnaires to the newspapers.

\*\* Two El Paso, Texas newspapers were included with the newspapers located within New Mexico since these are regularly given on mailing lists of the newspapers regularly serving New Mexico readers.

New Mexico Newspapers (cont.)

<u>Daily Newspapers</u>	<u>Weekly Newspapers</u>
Portales News Tribune*	Las Cruces Citizen
Raton Daily Range*	Lordsburg Liberal
Roswell Daily Record*	Los Alamos Monitor*
Silver City Daily Press and Independent	Rio Valley Record (Los Lunas)
Tucumcari Daily News	Valencia Independent (Los Lunas)
El Paso (Texas) Times***	Valencia County News* (Los Lunas)
The New Mexican* (Santa Fe)	Rio Grande Sun (Española)
	Ruidoso News*
	Corrales North Valley News (Sandoval)
	Santa Rosa News*
	Navajo Times (Shiprock)
	Silver City Enterprise*
	El Defensor-Chieftain (Socorro)
	Roundup (Socorro)
	Springer Tribune*

\* Indicates this newspaper's respondent returned the mail questionnaire either initially or after the follow-up distribution of the questionnaires to the newspapers.

\*\* Two El Paso, Texas newspapers were included with the newspapers located within New Mexico since these are regularly given on mailing lists of the newspapers regularly serving New Mexico readers.

New Mexico Newspapers (concl.)

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Daily NewspapersWeekly Newspapers

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Taos News and El Crepusculo\*

Hot Springs Herald\* (Truth or Consequences)

Tularosa Tribune\*

Bernalillo Times and El Independiente

Santa Fe News

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\* Indicates this newspaper's respondent returned the mail questionnaire either initially or after the follow-up distribution of the questionnaires to the newspapers.

### Newspaper Sampling Dates

The following list gives dates of weekday morning editions of the Albuquerque Journal and the El Paso (Texas) Times that were analyzed for newshole and agricultural news usage in this study: Dates and days were rotated statistically for a random sampling and the method checked for accuracy and error before use by a professor of statistics.

April	12 and 22, 1965
May	12 and 28, 1965
June	5 and 15, 1965
July	1 and 19, 1965
August	10 and 28, 1965
September	3 and 22, 1965
October	14 and 25, 1965
November	12 and 24, 1965
December	7 and 18, 1965
January	3 and 20, 1966
February	12 and 22, 1966
March	2 and 25, 1966

# HOW DOES YOUR NEWSPAPER HANDLE AGRICULTURAL NEWS?

(For a thesis on how New Mexico newspapers supply readers with agricultural news, by Everett W. Browning, New Mexico State University)

1. How often is your newspaper published? \_\_\_\_\_
2. a. What is the circulation of your newspaper? \_\_\_\_\_  
 b. Please indicate the percent of your readers in the following groups:  
 Farmers and Ranchers \_\_\_\_\_ Suburban readers \_\_\_\_\_ Urban readers \_\_\_\_\_
3. a. How many pages are there in the average issue of your newspaper? \_\_\_\_\_  
 b. How many column inches of news do you run in an average issue? \_\_\_\_\_  
 c. How many columns per page in your newspaper? \_\_\_\_\_
4. a. Does your newspaper carry a regular agricultural page?  
 Farm \_\_\_\_\_ Garden \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 b. If less than a page, how many columns a week? \_\_\_\_\_  
 c. Does your newspaper carry a regular agricultural column(s)?  
 Farm \_\_\_\_\_ Garden \_\_\_\_\_ Food Buying \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
5. In column at left check (✓) types of agricultural news your newspaper uses. At right, list more frequent sources of such news, including your own staff.

Type

Source

\_\_\_\_\_ Engineering (buildings,  
drainage, machinery).....

\_\_\_\_\_ Crops .....

\_\_\_\_\_ Animals .....

\_\_\_\_\_ Food marketing .....

\_\_\_\_\_ Food buying and nutrition .....

\_\_\_\_\_ Clothing .....

\_\_\_\_\_ Lawn and garden .....

\_\_\_\_\_ Youth organizations .....

\_\_\_\_\_ Adult organizations .....

\_\_\_\_\_ Forestry and wildlife .....

\_\_\_\_\_ Conservation of resources .....

\_\_\_\_\_ Government programs .....

\_\_\_\_\_ Interrelationship of town and country ...

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

6. Are there types of agricultural news which you do not use? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

7. Which would you prefer:

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. A story on the election of officers of an agricultural organization?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ b. A depth story on the value of the organization and how it operates?

8. Do you feel your newspaper will put more, or less, emphasis on agricultural news in the next 10 years? Check (✓) types.

<u>Type</u>	<u>Emphasis</u>		
	More	Same	Less
Engineering . . . . .	_____	_____	_____
Crops . . . . .	_____	_____	_____
Animals . . . . .	_____	_____	_____
Food Marketing . . . . .	_____	_____	_____
Food buying and nutrition . . . . .	_____	_____	_____
Clothing . . . . .	_____	_____	_____
Lawn and Garden . . . . .	_____	_____	_____
Youth organizations . . . . .	_____	_____	_____
Adult organizations . . . . .	_____	_____	_____
Forestry and wildlife . . . . .	_____	_____	_____
Conservation and resources . . . . .	_____	_____	_____
Government programs . . . . .	_____	_____	_____
Interrelationship of town and country . . .	_____	_____	_____
Other . . . . .	_____	_____	_____



9. a. How much educational training have you had?

Number of years high school? \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years college? \_\_\_\_\_

b. How many years of experience have you had in journalism? \_\_\_\_\_

In agriculture? \_\_\_\_\_

c. Is agricultural news a major or minor responsibility of your work?

Major \_\_\_\_\_ Minor \_\_\_\_\_

Name of newspaper \_\_\_\_\_

Your name and title \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**EDITORS' ATTITUDES TOWARD AGRICULTURAL NEWS  
AND THEIR USE OF AGRICULTURAL NEWS  
IN NEW MEXICO NEWSPAPERS**

by

**EVERETT BROWNING**

**B. S., Kansas State University, 1953**

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**AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS**

submitted in partial fulfillment of the


requirements for the degree

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Department of Technical Journalism

**KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas  
1966**

Approved by:

  
**Major Professor**

## PURPOSE

The objective of the study was threefold: to determine the attitudes of New Mexico newspaper editors towards agricultural news; to determine the amounts and kinds of agricultural news editors were using at the time of the study; and to determine amounts and kinds of agricultural news the editors were likely to use in the future.

The purpose was to determine guidelines that could be used in preparation of agricultural news by the New Mexico State University Agricultural Information Department in order to better serve the rural and urban peoples of the state with agricultural information.

## PROCEDURE

Two methods were used. A mail questionnaire was sent to editors of all New Mexico newspapers, both weeklies and dailies. A content analysis of the two major urban dailies serving the state was made to determine the accuracy of questionnaire answers.

In the questionnaire, editors were asked to name categories of agricultural news they used and the sources of their agricultural news. They were also asked to estimate the percent of urban and rural subscribers to their newspapers.

In the content analysis survey, 24 issues each of the Albuquerque Journal and the El Paso (Texas) Times were analyzed for amounts of agricultural news and categories of agricultural news used in a one-year sample. The sample, which was

randomized, included the Monday through Saturday editions so that only the agricultural news which successfully competed with the "hard" news of the day was measured.

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Results of the questionnaire showed that gathering and use of agricultural news was a minor role of newspaper staffs even when staff members were designated as "farm editors."

News stories about conservation of resources, livestock, and crops ranked highest in usage according to both the questionnaires and the content analysis. The content analysis study generally coincided with editors' replies to the questionnaire.

Weekly newspaper respondents estimated their farm and ranch readership higher than did daily newspaper editors and generally the smaller the newspaper, the larger the estimate of rural readership.

The state's land grant university and its field staff of county agents ranked highest as a source of agricultural news for both weekly and daily newspapers.

It could be implied from the results of the study that usage of less popular agricultural categories could be increased if local names were included.

Results also showed that suppliers of agricultural news could take into account greater use of wire services as a fast means of distribution for those agricultural news categories which have successfully competed with non-agricultural news.

Since few of New Mexico's newspapers had farm and ranch pages, agricultural news generally had to compete with non-agricultural news -- a situation that implies

further study of "quality" of writing compared to relative importance of subject matter.

The results also tended to show that suppliers of agricultural news fulfilled a need of both daily and weekly newspapers, that New Mexico editors generally believed their supply of agricultural news was adequate and that they planned little change in emphasis of agricultural news in the future.